

Anaconda Historic District
Ancient Order of Hibernians Building
321-323 East Commercial Avenue
Anaconda
Deer Lodge County
Montana

HABS No. MT-53-U

HABS
MONT,
12-ANAC,
1-U-

WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
PHOTOGRAPHS

ADDENDUM

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
ANACONDA HISTORIC DISTRICT
ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS BUILDING
MT-53-U

HABS
MONT,
12-ANAC,
1-U-

Date: 1899

Location: 321-323 East Commercial Avenue

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Owner: Community Development Agency

Significance: This building was the headquarters for the local chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, an Irish fraternal organization first established in Anaconda in 1885. The A.O.H. auxiliary was officially organized on May 17, 1896 with 45 charter members. Today the Anaconda A.O.H. is one of the two existing chapters west of the Mississippi. The other is in San Francisco. D.J. Hennessy, founder of Hennessy Department Store, Butte, loaned the Anaconda A.O.H. division the money to build the Hibernian Block. The building was erected in two stages and cost a total of \$30,000 to construct. In 1896, a one-story brick structure, measuring 50' x 80' was completed at the S.W. corner of East Commercial Avenue and Cedar Street. The building included two storefronts at the East Commercial Avenue facade, with three additional storefronts to the rear on Cedar Street. The second building, expanding the overall structural dimension to 50' x 140', was begun in the Spring of 1898 and completed in early January, 1899. Pressed brick with trimmings of sandstone, granite, and terra cotta were used in both portions of this structure. When completed, the A.O.H. Hall was equipped with electric lighting, steam heating, and other "modern" conveniences. This hall was the center of all A.O.H. activities until January 1977 when it was purchased by the Urban Renewal Department of the city of Anaconda for \$50,000. It is now under the ownership and supervision of the Community Development Agency. The building is threatened by demolition for the purposes of mall development.

Transmitted by: Monica E. Hawley, Historian, 1984

Addendum to:
Anaconda Historic District
Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.) Hall
321-323 East Commercial Street
Anaconda
Deer Lodge County
Montana

HABS No. MT-53-U

HABS
MONT,
12-ANAC,
1-U-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

Addendum to:

ANACONDA HISTORIC DISTRICT

ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS HALL

Location: 321-323 East Commercial Street
Anaconda, Montana
Deer Lodge County

HABS No. MT-53-U

(page 2)

HABS
MONT,
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1-11-

Last Owner: Anaconda-Deer Lodge Consolidated Government

Present Use: Demolished

Date of Construction: 1st story - 1896
2nd story - 1898
Building completed January 1899

Building Style: Richardsonian Romanesque (1st floor north facade, Cast-iron storefront)

Building Dimensions and Materials: Rectangular - 50 x 140 ft.; Brick (American bond) & stone

Statement of Significance: The Anaconda A.O.H. Hall is architecturally significant as the largest and most elaborate Hibernian hall in Montana and an outstanding example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture. The building's architectural significance also derives from design elements that reflect the national origins of the hall's builders and the organization's founding philosophy. The most prominent features are the twin brick towers that frame the A.O.H. Hall entrance. These round towers closely resemble the form of the ancient Round Tower of Glendalough, built in Ireland over 1000 years ago. Both the round towers and the rusticated stone colonettes dividing window openings on the second floor facade suggest a fortress of Irish strength, pride and independence. Other evidence of the building's Irish origins are the shamrocks which appear in floral relief on plaques on both the building interior and exterior.

The building has historical significance for its association with a fraternal organization that had immense local economic and political prestige. It is also associated with Anaconda's founder, Marcus Daly, a man of national importance in the copper mining and refining industry. It was Marcus Daly who developed Butte's first major copper mine, transforming Butte from a small silver camp into an industrial mining center of international renown. Daly created the city of Anaconda to house the world's largest non-ferrous smelter. Daly's industrial exploits created a demand for a large dependable labor force, for which Daly relied upon his fellow Irishmen. Thousands of first-generation Irish arrived in Butte and Anaconda seeking work and these men congregated in Irish neighborhoods, Catholic churches and Irish fraternal organizations. The A.O.H. and its grand hall in Anaconda are symbolic of Irish success in the new world. The building and the organization are also significant for the community events they sponsored yearly--St. Patrick's Day Parade and Ball and the July 4th Parade and Picnic--as promotions of local tradition and community spirit. The local chapter's early association with organization founders, D.J. Hennessy and P.J. Brophy, both prominent Butte merchants, also lend historical significance to the A.O.H. Hall.

The building's architectural and historical significance is acknowledged with its listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

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Date Submitted: September 6, 1988

Exterior Features of Notes:

The building has two primary elevations, one on the north and another on the east, both of which have storefronts on the ground floor. The front (north side along Commercial St.) contains elements of Richardsonian Romanesque on the second floor and a more functional cast-iron storefront on the ground floor. The most distinctive feature of the upper facade are the rusticated stone colonettes--terminating in a corbel or pendant-- that separate paired, double-hung window openings. Above the window opening at either side of the front facade are semicircular decorative metal panels with a sunburst motif framed in round-headed brick arches. There is a rectangular metal panel above the arches with a Rococo medallion in relief on the panel. The treatment above the window opening ends in a brick pediment framed in cut stone (Those pediments have been knocked off the building facade.). The first floor commercial storefront space is defined by brick pilasters accented by granite quoins with a stone sill running the width of the front. Symmetrical plate glass display windows and a wooden door with transom are set into the cast-iron front. A metal cornice with dentils, a cast-iron beam running the width of the front facade and a series of vertical window panes sit below the beam and run the width of the facade. Stone is used throughout the second floor facade as a belt course for sills, a lintel course, to cap the top of the wall and to form the outline of the brick pediment rising above the wall on both sides of the front facade.

The east elevation contains three storefronts--each framed by a semi-elliptical stone arch-- and the Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.) Hall entry--framed by two round brick towers (which penetrate the interior walls) with "blind" elongated window slits and a traditional Anglo-Saxon brick arch forming the entry. The brick courses on the towers are broken by belt courses of stone and the towers vary in height. The towers reflect early Christian architecture found in Ireland and with the stone colonettes repeated on the second floor facade, lend a fortress-quality to the hall. The towers and the stone colonettes were originally capped with cone-shaped finials topped with a ball. The letters, A.O.H., appear in granite relief with foliated shamrocks intertwined on a panel above the entry. The entry is completed by plain wooden doors with decorative strap hinges and a wooden-covered arched transom. Each storefront has double wooden doors with a transom flanked by a large four-lite display window with a semi-elliptical window frame with four-lites over the entire entry. There are two porthole windows in the middle of the east facade. The ornamental elements over the windows and the stone colonettes are repeated on the second floor of the east facade. There is also a cast-iron fire-escape on the east side and south end of the building.

The rear of the building (south side) has a brick chimney with corbelling at the top in the southwest corner. There is also a woodframe entry with two windows above the door. An interesting structural detail is revealed on the west facade: a series of steel posts supporting an I-beam that appears to run the length of the building addition.

Interior Features of Note:

All of the storefronts on Cedar Street (106, 108, 110) are similar in layout and design with pressed tin ceilings, plaster walls and a stairway leading to a balcony. The storefronts along Commercial Street (321-323), although of similar floor space, are both slightly different in layout. The storefront at 321 Commercial is a long, narrow space with two

bathrooms and a kitchen at the rear with a loading/work area behind. This room has a pressed tin ceiling. Beaded wainscoting with rosettes set in the wooden trim above line the bottom of the walls. The storefront at 323 Commercial has a partition at the front and a large open area towards the rear.

The A.O.H. Hall on the second floor is divided into three main rooms: a dance hall, a bar and a meeting hall. The dance hall is a large room with a partition for a cloak room, a triangular stage at the other end of the hall, and three steel posts supporting an I-beam running the length of the room. There is a coved moulding with architrave moulding below which run around the ceiling perimeter. Beaded wainscoting is used on the bottom of the four walls. There is a raised wooden platform (approximately 3 ft. wide) around the floor perimeter.

In the hallway leading downstairs and into the other two rooms there is a plaster plaque with doric columns and an entablature with A.O.H. and shamrocks in relief. Between the columns is a building dedication with its date of completion, 1899, and a list of building committee members.

In the barroom there is a counter which divides the room into a kitchen space and a bathroom, as well as the bar. The bar itself has been removed. The meeting room has a decorative tin ceiling with cove moulding with medallions. Along the south wall there are decorative heating vent grates and a raised wooden platform (approximately 3 ft. wide) runs around the wall perimeter.

Historical Background

The Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.) Division No. 1 formally organized on September 13, 1885, only two years after the creation of the smelter town of Anaconda. In order to understand the evolution of the Anaconda Hibernians and their relationship to their fraternal brothers in Montana and the West it is important to know something about Marcus Daly, the Irish immigrant who created the town of Anaconda and a mining and metallurgical empire.

Marcus Daly arrived in Butte in 1876, working as an agent for the Walker Brothers of Salt Lake to investigate a silver property. By 1880 Daly had purchased of the Anaconda mine and was well on his way to becoming Butte's leading mining magnate. In 1883 Marcus Daly located a site for a concentrator and smelter along Warm Springs Creek 26 miles west of Butte for processing the copper ore from his Butte mines. Within months of the groundbreaking for the new smelter, the new town of Anaconda had grown to 500 residents. By August 1883 Anaconda had seven hotels boardinghouses, six stores and twelve saloons. Within one year 1200 men worked under the employ of Marcus Daly, a good number of which hailed from Daly's homeland, Ireland. Whenever possible, both in his Butte mines and in his Anaconda smelter, Daly hired Irish men, laying the foundation for the birth of the Anaconda A.O.H.¹

A Hibernian organization emerged in Anaconda only five years after its initial appearance in nearby Butte and nine years after its birth in Montana, but its roots stretch back to Ireland where a group of Catholic peasants organized in the sixteenth century to resist English and Protestant land ownership. The A.O.H., with its strongly nationalistic anti-English sentiments, first appeared in the United States in 1836 and moved west with the working-class Irish. Irish miners emigrating to Butte from Ireland and the copper mines of Michigan to work in Daly's mines found a reprieve from the rigors of industrial life in a foreign land within the Butte A.O.H. At the regular meetings immigrants could hear the mother tongue spoken, participate in the traditions of Irish social life, meet a prospective Irish wife, locate a job for a relative, gain protection from the financial hardship of injuries or sickness on the job and receive a proper Catholic burial in the event of accidental death in the mines. The Irish immigrant could gain rights to these privileges with a membership fee of \$5 and monthly dues of \$.50. As the Montana Catholic noted in 1899, the A.O.H. offered "refuge for the exiled," and Ireland's native sons responded enthusiastically, its membership swelling to over 1000 by 1903.²

The Hibernians met on a regular basis to transact lodge business, to renew old traditions and to socialize. One of the most important organization endeavors was finding employment for newly arrived "brothers" or for those still in Ireland, which was simplified by the large number of Hibernians who worked as employment officers in the mines and smelters. In addition, the upper echelons of the Anaconda Company which owned most of the Butte mines and the smelter in Anaconda, was littered with Hibernians with enormous corporate power such as Marcus Daly, William Scallon, John Ryan and Con Kelley. Between 1889 and 1919 over 70 percent of the Butte Hibernians worked as miners. At least two members of the Anaconda A.O.H. building committee, William Kelliher and Owen O'Neill, worked at the Reduction Works, and one can safely assume that a good

majority of 300 Anaconda Hibernians worked at the local smelter owned by native son, Marcus Daly.³

Regular A.O.H. meetings typically dealt with a variety of issues and activities. A top priority at each meeting was a discussion of sick and death benefits for fraternal brothers. Benefits for a debilitating injury or illness amounted to \$8 a week for thirteen weeks and \$100 for funeral expenses. The death benefits have survived over time and Anacondan Hibernians now are entitled to \$250 for burial expenses. Fifty members of the Anaconda A.O.H. No. 1 are buried in a separate plot of the local cemetery. The formal business was followed by speeches promoting Irish independence, singing of Irish rebellion songs and merrymaking for which the local chapter invested \$25 to \$50 for beer, whiskey and cigars. In addition to these informal gatherings the local chapter sponsored two major celebrations each year: a St. Patrick's Day parade and dress ball and a July 4th parade and picnic. Fund raising was an integral part of both events and proceeds were donated to local churches, schools, scholarships, national disaster victims and to the cause of Irish independence. Between 1885 and 1899 the Anaconda A.O.H. paid out \$16,000 in sick and death benefits as well as other charities. Because of the organization's sizeable membership, its high visibility in community affairs and the economic power of a portion of its members, the A.O.H. represented a potent political force within the community.⁴

Four years before Montana achieved statehood two prominent Butte merchants and Hibernians, P.J. Brophy and D.J. Hennessy, presided over the organizational meeting of Division No. 1 of the Anaconda A.O.H. In 1901 Hennessy served as the president of the state organization. At that first meeting in the Evans Opera House in the summer of 1885, 17 Hibernians were initiated and the new organization elected Thomas Daly to serve as president. Seventy-five members marched in the July 4th parade three years later, indicating a substantial growth in numbers. By 1890 discussions began about the need for a hall and on August 26, 1892, trustees for Division No.1 purchased property on the corner of Commercial and Cedar--Lots 1 and 2, Block 27-- from Deer Lodge businessmen, N.J. Bielenberg, and D.D. Walker and James K. Mallory for \$5200. Title for the property passed to the Anaconda Hibernians in February 1894. The Hibernians selected a building committee which included Kelliher, O'Neill, M. McDevitt, Hugh Daly, T.J. McCarthy and James Byrne. William Kelliher also served as vice president of the statewide organization by 1901. The organization obtained a building loan from D.J. Hennessy, a prominent Butte Hibernian and owner of Butte's largest department store. References were made in organization minutes to "Brother Donohue," as the building architect, but the historical record provides no other information about the architect's background or even his business residence, although from the reference one can infer that the architect was a Hibernian.⁵

On July 19, 1895 Division No. 1 voted to erect a Hibernian Hall. Ground breaking for the new hall began in April 1896. During the first phase builders erected a two-story structure covering 50 x 80 ft., which included two retail storefronts along Commercial Street. On May 25, 1896 the Anaconda Hibernians hosted the state A.O.H. convention in their new hall. That same year Anaconda women organized an auxiliary of the A.O.H. Division No. 1 with 45 charter members. In the spring of 1898 the building was extended to the back of

the lot, creating a brick and stone building 50 x 140 ft., which included three retail storefronts along the new east facade, at a total cost of \$30,000. Contractors completed work on the addition on January 1, 1899, and the A.O.H. hosted a grand ball in the new building on February 9, 1899. The Anaconda Hibernians dedicated their newly constructed hall on St. Patrick's Day 1899 with a crowd of 2000 well-wishers in attendance. Evening speakers included Father Follet, who brought cheers from the crowd when he declared, "...If the shamrock is forbidden to grow on Irish soil, it has found fertile soil in free America, where it can grow and thrive." Judge T.D. Fitzgerald followed with a pledge to give aid to those in sickness and distress and to work for the good of the common man. The keynote speaker, H.J.T. Casey, the assistant County Attorney of Deer Lodge County, provided historical insight into the plight of Ireland and its domination by outsiders and ended with a rousing rendition of "God Save Ireland." The Hibernian Hall dedicated, the Division No. 1 proceeded to rent the ground floor commercial space to local businesses and open the dance hall for community social events and by 1908 the Anacondan Hibernians paid off their building loan.⁶

The Anaconda Hibernians prospered as an organization for the next 89 years. They continued to maintain an active membership even after selling their building to the Anaconda Community Development Agency in 1977. In 1978 urban renewal threatened the hall with demolition and only a concerted legal action by citizens prevented its destruction. In August 1979 the Hibernian Hall was determined eligible and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The membership has slipped from its peak number of over 300 to 150 members in 1988, with an equal number in a separate women's organization. During this same period, the Butte chapter, which once boasted over 1000 members, actually lost its charter and has only recently been reactivated through Division No. 1's initiation. Prior to the recent reactivation of A.O.H. charters in Helena and Great Falls, the Anaconda local remained the largest Hibernian organization between Minneapolis and San Francisco. The drop in membership in Anaconda, Butte and the nation at large reflects a changing society in which fraternal organizations have been replaced by other social institutions. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Hibernians claimed over 100,000 male and 40,000 female members. Today, only a fraction of that number continue the Hibernian traditions and the Anaconda Division No. 1 A.O.H. could be considered one of the nation's most vital Hibernian chapters, continuing the traditions and community service established by Anaconda's earliest Irish settlers. In July 1988, the abandoned A.O.H. Hall was demolished by its owner, the Anaconda local government, to make way for a fast-food restaurant.⁷

Endnotes

1. Michael Malone, The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier, 1864-1906 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), p. 18-19, 30; M.A. Leeson, History of Montana, 1739-1885 (Chicago: Warner, Beers & Co., 1885), p. 566.
2. David Emmons, An Immigrant Working Class: Butte's Irish Miners, 1875-1922, to be published by University of Illinois Press (1989), p. 120-129.
3. Emmons, Butte's Irish, p. 126, 155-56; Anaconda City Directory (Anaconda: R.L. Polk, 1903), p. 255; Jack Kelly, personal interview, July 7, 1988.
4. Emmons, Butte's Irish, p. 129-33, 185; Kelly interview; Anaconda Standard, March 18, 1899, p. 4.
5. Anaconda Standard, March 17, 1899, p. 4, July 19, 1901, p.5; Deer Lodge County Deed Record, Volume 27, p. 519; Deer Lodge County Historical Group, In the Shadow of Mount Haggin: The Story of Anaconda and Deer Lodge County from 1863-1976 (Anaconda: 1975), p. 148; A.O.H. Minute Book, Division No. 1, 1895-1907, July 19, 1895, December 7, 1898.
6. Anaconda Standard, May 17, 1896, May 25, 1896, February 8, 1899, March 18, 1899, March 17, 1917; Alice Finnegan, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Anaconda A.O.H. Hall, June 27, 1979.
7. Finnegan, National Register Nomination; Kelly, personal interview; Anaconda Standard, March 18, 1899, p.4.

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